

October 7, 2019

Chair Jason M. Lewis
24 Beacon Street
Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

Chair Alice H. Peisch
24 Beacon Street
Room 473-G
Boston, MA 02133



Dear Chair Lewis and Chair Peisch,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council, I urge the Joint Committee on Housing to **favorably report Senate Bill 327/House Bill 566: *An Act Concerning Genocide Education*** out of the Committee for quick action by the Legislature.

We are living in a time of rising incivility during which hate groups have been emboldened and bigotry and intolerance have been normalized. Hate crimes and bias incidents against minority and targeted communities are no longer the exception, but sadly, have become a part of every day life. In 2018, ADL (Anti-Defamation League) tracked 59 anti-Semitic incidents in K-12 schools here in the Commonwealth. Many of these incidents involved Nazi imagery, Hitler-related slogans, and Holocaust-related harassment. One of the most effective tools for combating this targeted hatred and violence is through education about effect of supremacist ideology left unchecked.

This ethos is the lifeblood of the Jewish community here in the Commonwealth and across the globe. It is our sacred obligation to transmit our traditions and stories, the tragic and the uplifting, to future generations so we never forget. We shall never forget the consequences where hatred and bigotry are left to flourish and take root. We shall never forget those who stood with us in times of darkness; the heroes and the martyrs who sacrificed their comfort and security for and with us. We teach, so we can say never again.

JCRC is charged with the sacred obligation to transmit our communal stories. We are the stewards of the New England Holocaust Memorial, the six striking glass towers just steps from the State House on the Freedom Trail in the heart of the City of Boston. The memorial was dedicated on October 22nd, 1995, as a hallowed spot for remembrance, for contemplation and for education. Since its dedication, thousands of tourists, students, and wanderers have walked through, left with a deeper understanding of the impacts of hatred run unchecked.

This legislation honors the memories of the victims of genocide, millions of innocent people targeted and murdered because of who they are. By teaching the next generation about the Holocaust and other genocides, we can reverse the tide of hate. We can teach students to be critical thinkers and to reflect on their role as individuals in society. We can educate students about the dangers of remaining silent when others are oppressed.

Our past informs our present and will lead us towards a better tomorrow.

Respectfully,

Aaron J Agulnek